

S-p-r-e-a-d-i-n-g the word

The March issue of *Nutrition Action*, published monthly by **The Center for Science in the Public Interest**, contains an interesting and comprehensive article about the problems associated with sodium in the American diet. The article, by Dr. Michael Jacobson, co-director of the Center and author of *Nutrition Scoreboard* among other publications, discussed sodium in the context of our relatively heavy consumption of salt—which contains sodium—the problem of determining the sodium content of processed foods, and the health consequences of high salt intake, particularly in relation to hypertension, a major American public health problem. Subscriptions to *Nutrition Action* are \$10 for one year and \$18 for 2 years. The Center for Science in the Public Interest address is 1755 S Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009.

The *Journal of Home Economics*, the official publication of the **American Home Economics Association**, has published *100 Ways To Save Energy*. The article, reprinted from the May issue of the *Journal*, is divided into 4 categories: "In the Winter," "In the Summer," "Any Season at Home" and "Any Season Away from Home." In addition, the authors of the article have compiled an extensive bibliography on saving energy. The article and the bibliography may be purchased for \$1 by writing to Sales Office, American Home Economics Association, 2010 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20036.

New fair fare

Amtrak has made first-class travel by train less expensive for overnight passengers who have physical disabilities.

Handicapped persons are now able to travel in a sleeping car bedroom without paying extra to occupy the double accommodation alone.

Previously Amtrak required an additional charge of 50% of the basic fare for single occupancy of a bedroom. The new policy was adopted because space limitations often prohibit disabled passengers from using the smaller, less expensive roomette. The new fare structure will mean a \$90 savings for handicapped passengers traveling from New York to Los Angeles via Chicago.

The change will benefit passengers on Amtrak's older, long-distance trains. New passenger equipment has been designed for easy access by the handicapped.

consumer news

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
Office of Consumer Affairs

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'Kidvid' rule proposed

Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has published its long-awaited proposal to restrict television advertising aimed at children. Responding to year-old petitions from 2 public interest organizations—**Action for Children's Television** (ACT) and the **Center for Science in the Public Interest** (CSPI)—and a Feb. 1978 petition from **Consumers Union** (CU) and the **Committee on Children's Television** (CCT), FTC has proposed a regulation which would:

- (a) Ban TV advertising directed to children too young to understand its selling purpose.
- (b) Ban TV advertising of the sugared food products most likely to cause tooth decay that is directed to, or seen by, audiences that include a significant proportion of older children.
- (c) Require balancing nutrition or health disclosures in TV advertising of other sugared foods directed to, or seen by, a significant proportion of older children.

A report prepared by FTC staff who investigated the issues of fact and law raised by the petitions defines the young children in (a) as under 8, and the older children in (b) and (c) as between 8 and 12. Copies of the *Staff Report on Televised Advertising to Children* may be obtained by writing to Distribution and Duplication Branch, Federal Trade Commission, Washington, DC 20580.

The staff report points out that the average 2-to-11 year-old watches well over 1,300 hours of TV annually (more time than those who attend school spent in the classroom) and sees about 20,000 commercials each year, roughly 3 hours of TV advertising every week. Based on its investigation, the FTC staff finds that many young children don't understand the selling purpose of TV advertising and regard it as just another form of programming.

More than half the TV advertising aimed at children is for food, the staff found, almost all of it containing large amounts of added sugar—many of the cereals, for example, are more than half sugar and at least one is 70% sugar. To maintain their market position, the FTC staff maintains, TV advertisers of these products are competing in a "sugar derby," in which no company can afford to be "out-sugared." According to the staff, this sugar derby undermines parents' ability to instill healthful dietary habits in their children by leading children to demand sugared foods in preference to more nutritious alternatives, creates or worsens conflicts between parents and children, and negates what little nutrition education takes place in the schools.

The staff report notes that the present heavy consumption of sugar by Americans (126 pounds per year per capita or more than one-third pound per day for every man, woman, child and infant) is one of the major causes of widespread tooth decay and means that some individuals, including many children, according to some experts, probably consume so much sugar that it

(Continued on page 2)

Recalls

• CANNED MEAT—**Agriculture Dept.** has announced the voluntary recall of all canned beef products processed by Casasa, S. A. Dolores of Buenos Aires because of possible spoilage. This recall is a precautionary measure to guard against the possibility that some underprocessed cans escape detection. The products, beef with natural juices, beef and gravy, and canned corned beef, were distributed nationwide by 84 principal companies under a wide variety of brand names. All products, however, can be identified by the code No. 1964 embossed on the cans and possibly printed on the labels. The products were distributed in 12-ounce cans to grocery stores and in 6-pound cans to restaurants and institutions—as well as to US plants for reprocessing into foods such as corned beef hash. What to do: Do not eat or even taste the meat, but return any cans with the code number to the stores where you bought it.

• SWEATSHIRTS—**Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)** and San Francisco Work Shirts, Inc. announced the voluntary recall and refund of purchase price on 4 styles of ladies' sweatshirts because they do not comply with a Federal flammability standard. Sweatshirts were sold nationwide by department stores and specialty shops as part of the company's 1977 holiday line. CPSC says 22,500 sweatshirts were imported from a Hong Kong manufacturer and distributed to retailers during October and early November. Other shirts which appear to be identical but which were delivered to retailers last July have met flammability standards. The shirts are all cotton, fleecy side out, with long sleeves. Sewn-in labels say "San Francisco Tea Party" with a cablecar woven in the label. Shirts were available in winter white, pink, yellow, peach, blue and chamois. What to do: If you think you have one of these sweatshirts, don't wear it, but write for refund procedures to San Francisco Shirt Works, Inc., Attn: Nancy Bush, 1111 17th St., San Francisco, CA 94107. Or call CPSC's toll-free hotline 800-638-2666; in Maryland call 800-492-2937 for refund instructions.

• CURLING IRONS—**Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)** announced the voluntary recall of model 100 "Magic Curl" curling irons, distributed by C&S Trading Co., because they pose a possible shock or burn hazard. The curling irons affected have a yellow swivel handle with 2 identifying stickers, one with the name and address of C&S Trading

(Continued on page 4)

Kidvid (Continued from page 1)

takes the place of essential nutrients they would otherwise eat. Potential relationships of sugar consumption to other health problems, such as obesity, are also cited.

The staff report also examines the persuasive influence of TV commercials on children under 12, quoting expert opinion that the 30-second commercial is the most effective device yet for implementing any relatively simple idea in a child's mind, and citing admissions of advertisers that commercials addressed to children are designed to turn them into what one calls "highly successful niggers" for the advertised products.

TV advertising for *any* product to children too young to understand the intent of commercials is both unfair and deceptive, the staff concludes, and TV advertising for sugared products is "deceptive" under the FTC Act because it fails to reveal material facts regarding the health hazards of sugar consumption, and "unfair" under the Act because, among other reasons, it violates well-established legal policies that protect children against the serious and lasting consequences of their own mistakes and against adult exploitation. Therefore, the staff recommended the remedies FTC has published as its proposal.

In publishing the proposal for comment in the *Federal Register* (see this issue of CONSUMER REGISTER for specifics on how to comment and where to get information on compensation for public participation costs incurred in this proceeding) FTC asks for comment on other remedies and other issues as well, however, such as opinions and information on the appropriateness and workability of disclosures of the highly cariogenic (decay-causing) nature of appropriate products within child-oriented commercials for them; separate corrective TV commercials funded by highly cariogenic product advertisers; and limits, short of a ban, on the particular kinds or number and frequency of the advertising messages at issue.

There are obvious questions regarding the Constitution's guarantee of free speech raised by the proposal which will have to be resolved either during the proceedings required before the proposed rule can become effective—which will take an estimated 3 to 5 years—or afterward, when the industries affected seek relief in the courts.

It is also quite possible that Congressional action will terminate or limit what has come to be called the "kidvid" proposal. On May 2, a subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee passed 5-4 an FTC appropriations bill amendment introduced by Rep. Mark Andrews (ND) that would prohibit FTC from using funds for any rulemaking proceeding affecting food products considered safe by the **Food and Drug Administration (FDA)**. The amendments' precise effect on the kidvid proposal isn't clear. In any case, the amendment must still be considered by the House Appropriations Committee, the entire House, and the Senate as well, before it becomes final.

New York generic drug substitution list

The New York State Dept. of Health has just published its list of generic drugs that may be substituted for equivalent but more expensive brand name products.

Until recently [see CONSUMER NEWS March 15] the list was available only from **Food and Drug Administration's Freedom of Information Office** for \$13.60. Now it can be purchased for \$1 by writing to Health Education Service, P.O. Box 7126, Albany, NY 12224. Ask for *Safe, Effective and Therapeutically Equivalent Prescription Drugs*.

Fitness, caution and feet

Robert Benchley used to say that when the urge to exercise came upon him he lay down till it went away. For reasons of health, fashion, pleasure or pressure, millions of Americans are taking up fitness, as the phenomenal booms in jogging and other participant sports like tennis and racquetball attest. Businesses, government agencies, and health insurers are turning to fitness programs as a cost-containment approach—keeping employees healthy keeps sick leave and health care costs down. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Virginia, for example, recently announced the hiring of an industrial physical fitness coordinator to promote better health habits and exercise programs among their own employees and personnel of enrolled groups.

Benefits of fitness programs, aside from the sense of well-being and self-confidence many individuals report, derive from enhanced cardiovascular function, better diet, weight control, improved muscle tone, and elimination of destructive health habits.

Authorities warn, however, that beginners must be careful. Running and jogging, for example, are becoming so popular that *The Complete Book of Running* by James F. Fixx has become a runaway (no pun intended) national best seller. Fixx, an apostle of running, cites this warning from Dr. Leroy H. Getchell of Ball State University: "If you're overweight, or have a tendency toward high blood pressure, or have a family history of heart disease, ask a doctor to check you over thoroughly." Getchell recommends a stress test, i.e., an electrocardiogram (ECG) while exercising, for anyone else with the slightest doubt about his or her health and adds that a feeling of fatigue an hour after a workout is a sign that the workout was too vigorous and the individual should ease up. Some doctors are more cautious than Getchell. Dr. Kenneth Crawford, whose *Aerobics* and *The New Aerobics* were factors in starting the running boom in the US, recommends a medical checkup within 3 months before starting an exercise program for anyone 30 to 39 years of age; a checkup with a resting ECG for those 40-59, and adds a stress test for anyone over 59. Under-30s, he feels, require only a medical checkup within the past year. If in doubt for any reason a prudent approach would be to consult your doctor.

Health, Education and Welfare Dept. estimates that 87% of Americans have some sort of foot ailment, from corns and calluses to "jogger's ankle" (sprains) to spurs and clubfoot. James J. Conniff notes in his article *Getting on a Good Footing* that podiatrists feel that better foot care—2 baths, an alcohol rub, light powdering and gentle massage daily—and careful shoe selection—avoid high heels, pointed toes and any shoes that require a "break-in" period—will help prevent some of these conditions.

Extra care is especially in order when buying running shoes. Washington, DC podiatrist Myles J. Schneider, writing in the *Washington (DC) Post*, advises that the shoes should elevate the heel about a half-inch higher than the front of the foot and cup it snugly, firmly and fully. The sole should be about a half-inch thick and flexible. The arch supports and the uppers should be comfortable, smooth, soft and non-irritating. The toe box (space for the toes) should be rounded and about one inch deep. Schneider further advises that when trying on running shoes, if one foot is larger, fit that one; wear whatever socks, pads, etc., you wear when running; try them on at the end of the day (feet tend to swell after a long run); have them fitted while standing and try walking and jogging on a hard surface, if possible; and make sure you have a thumb's width between your toes and the toe end of the shoe.

Do-it-yourself blood pressure devices

Blood pressure devices have become more available to consumers in recent years. Both manual and automated devices for home use are sold in drug stores, medical supply stores and department stores. Coin-operated equipment can be found in drug stores, banks, shopping centers and other public places.

High blood pressure (hypertension) is a major public health problem in the US, and the more serious because it often is undetected until it results in serious or fatal illness. There are potential benefits in convenient devices permitting consumers to measure their own blood pressure, and their accessibility emphasizes the importance of blood pressure to good health. Multiple measurements outside the doctor's office can help in the treatment of hypertension, especially in evaluating drugs or other therapy. They may motivate those on therapy to stick to their regimen, and may encourage the involvement of patients and their families in therapy. They also can save money.

There are, however, some risks which must be weighed against the benefits, such as inadequate training of patients in measurement techniques, inaccurate equipment, and poor understanding of the meaning of blood pressure readings.

The **American Heart Association** (AHA) is concerned about coin-operated blood pressure devices. AHA feels that these devices should be available only in conjunction with a medical department. They say no self-administered device is a substitute for evaluation by a doctor.

Health, Education and Welfare Dept.'s High Blood Pressure Coordinating Committee believes that with the proper safeguards widespread availability of blood pressure devices can be helpful in combatting hypertension.

The Committee recommends proper medical supervisor or manufacturer training of persons measuring blood pressure at home and development of standards for performance, use, labeling and maintenance of blood pressure devices by the **Food and Drug Administration** under the authority of the Medical Devices Amendments of 1976 (Public Law 94-295). Adequate informational material should be permanently displayed by coin-operated machines and incorporated into the packaging of consumer-purchased devices.

The Committee agrees with AHA that blood pressure readings must be interpreted by a qualified medical professional.

Recalls

(Continued from page 2)

Co., and the other with "Magic Curl, 120V-60c/s, H130W, LOW15W, Korea." The defect lies in the handle casing which can separate after a short period of use, allowing sparks to be emitted and creating the possibility of shock or burns. Owners of these curling irons should immediately stop using them and either return them to their dealer or mail them to the C&S Trading Co., 138 East Savarona Way, Carson, CA 90746, for a free replacement curling iron and reimbursement of postage costs. For additional information call the C&S Trading Co. at 213-770-1485. To report a product related injury call CPSC's toll-free hotline at 800-636-2666; in Maryland only, call 800-492-2937.

• CARS—The Chrysler Corp. and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration have announced the recall of more than a million Dodge Aspens and Plymouth Volares and 42,000 Dodge Omnis and Plymouth Horizons which may have defective front end suspensions that could cause a loss of vehicle control. Models affected are 1976, 1977 and 1978 Aspens and Volares built during 1976 and 1977, and the first 42,000 Omnis and Horizons. The problem involves the front-end pivot bar bracket on some of the Aspens and Volares which may develop fatigue failure under heavy duty service and result in loss of steering control. The Omnis and Horizons will be checked for a potential failure of the front suspension balljoint which would also affect steering. Owners of affected vehicles will be notified by the company as soon as replacement parts are available.

Looking for a lawn care service?

If you're considering a lawn care service to get your lawn in shape, the Nassau County (NY) Office of Consumer Affairs (OCA) suggests you shop carefully and ask questions before signing up for service.

- Find out what the total cost will be. Is price based on square footage? To avoid surprises, figure the square footage of your lawn. Ask about extra charges. Put them all in the contract. Make sure all desired services are included in the contract.
- Find out if your lawn will need more seeding or feeding later and what that will cost. Ask about the quality of materials used.
- Make sure you water the lawn properly. Keep a record of watering. Firms may claim improper watering is the reason for problems, should they arise.
- Be sure that you, or a neighbor, supervise lawn work. OCA reports that many consumers complain that workers came but did nothing.
- Know the particulars of an advertised "money back guarantee." Ask if the guarantee applies to just the last application or to the entire contract. Will you get a refund or simply a free application?
- Learn what's being promised and when you can expect to see results. Will you see improvement immediately or after 2 years of service?
- Check to see which firms do the best work and are most cooperative in resolving complaints. OCA suggests you check with friends and neighbors for referrals of reputable firms.

New Federal publication

• National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has prepared a new brochure on *Travel and Camper Trailer Safety* which tells how to load and weigh recreational trailers and gives safety tips and procedures. NHTSA estimates that in 1977 alone, an estimated 146,000 travel trailers and 54,000 camper trailers were sold in the US. Single copies are available free by writing to General Services Division/Distribution, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Washington, DC 20590. [A related article on moving household goods appeared in CONSUMER NEWS May 15, 1977.]

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